

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

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COA-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11 EPA-04 INR-10 IO-14 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4078

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7861

PASS SCI FOR NASA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TSPA, OSCI, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE PARTICIPATION IN EARTH RESOURCES EXPERIMENT
PROGRAM

1. ON OCT 23 THE ACTING SCIENCE ATTACHE MET WITH DR HUGO FERNANDEZ CORIA, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY (INTA) TO DISCUSS TWO BASIC PROBLEMS RELATED TO POSSIBLE ARGENTINE PARTICIPATION WITH NASA IN THE EARTH RESOURCES EXPERIMENT PROGRAM. JUDGING FROM THE EMBASSY OFFICER'S IMPRESSIONS, CORIA IS A STAUNCH PERONIST AND A RABID NATIONALIST WHO IS PARTICULARLY SUSPICIOUS OF AND GENERALLY UNFRIENDLY TOWARDS THE US. THE EXPOSITION THAT FOLLOWS SHOULD BE READ WITH THESE FACTS IN MIND.

2. CORIA'S FIRST CONCERN INVOLVES THE SELECTION OF DR OSCAR DOMINGUEZ AS A PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) FOR NASA. COMINGUEZ IS NOT A PERONIST (AND IS PROBABLY AN ANTI-PERONIST) WHO WORKS FOR INTA UNDER CORIA. COMINGUEZ HAS PROPOSED A RESEARCH PROJECT IN WHICH HE WOULD, WITH THE USE OF DATA COLLECTED BY SKYLAD AND ERTS AND PROVIDED BY NASA, STUDY THE ARGENTINE "HUMID PAMPA". THIS PROPOSAL WAS TRANSMITTED TO THE NATIONAL
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COMMISSION FOR SPACE INVESTIGATION (CNIE) FOR ITS ENDORSEMENT

BUT THE CNIE WILL NOT TAKE ANY ACTION UNTIL INTA GIVES ITS APPROVAL. HOWEVER, CORIA IS UNWILLING TO APPROVE DOMINGUEZ' PARTICIPATION BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO CORIA, COMINGUEZ IS A LIAR, A THIEF, A SCROUNDEL AND IS TECHNICALLY IMCOMPETENT. CORIA SAID THAT AN INVESTIGATION WAS UNDERWAY WHICH WOULD RESULT IN DOMINGUEZ' IMPRISONMENT. CORIA ALSO WARNED THAT THERE COULD BE SERIOUS ADVERSE EFFECTS (E.G. BAD PUBLICITY, EROSION OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, ETC.) FOR NASA AND THE USG IF NASA WERE TO MAINTAIN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH DOMINGUEZ. THE EMBASSY OFFICER TOLD CORIA THAT THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE A PROBLEM, AT LEAST ONE FOR NASA OR THE USG, SINCE DOMINGUEZ' RESEARCH PROPOSAL WOULD APPARENTLY NOT BE ACTED UPON BY NASA WITHOUT THE CONCURRENCE OF INTA OR CNIE.

3. CORIA'S SECOND COMPLAINT INVOLVES TWO OF THE CONTRACTURAL CONDITIONS SUPPOSEDLY LEVIED BY NASA ON ANY PI WHO IS ENGAGED IN A COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT. CORIA TOLD THE EMBOFF THAT THE CONTRACT WHICH MUST BE SIGNED WITH NASA STIPULATES THAT THE PI CANNOT RELEASE OR PUBLISH INFORMATION OR CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE RESEARCH PROJECT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF NASA. ACCORDING TO CORIA, THIS CONDITION WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO ANY RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL OF THE PERONIST GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE GOA SHOULD NOT (AND BY INFERENCE WILL NOT) DELEGATE TO ANY NON-ARGENTINE ENTITY THE AUTHORITY TO DECIDE WHETHER THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH ABOUT ARGENTINA SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT BE RELEASED. THE OTHER CONTRACTURAL OBLIGATION WHICH CORIA COMPLAINED ABOUT INVOLVES THE NECESSITY FOR THE PI TO SUBMIT COMPREHENSIVE MONTHLY REPORTS TO NASA. CORIA WAS NOT VERY SPECIFIC ON THIS POINT, AND IT IS NOT CLEAR IF THE COMPLAINT INVOLVES THE FREQUENCY, OR THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION REQUIRED, OR BOTH. HOWEVER, CORIA DID SAY THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC FOR NASA AND THE USG TO EXPECT ARGENTINA TO PROVIDE THE US WITH STRATEGIC CROP INFORMATION WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM A STUDY SUCH AS THAT PROPOSED BY DOMINGUEZ, SINCE THE US AND ARGENTINA ARE MAJOR COMPETITORS IN THE PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES. THE EMBOFF TOLD CORIA THAT HE WOULD INVESTIAGATE THE POINTS RAISED.

4. CORIA CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT CNIE AND INTA ARE STILL INTERESTED IN UNDERTAKING A COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT WITH NASA, BUT ONLY WITH A PI WHO IS QUOTE TECHNICALLY COMPETENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCEPTABLE TO ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES UNQUOTE AND ONLY IF THE CONTRACT IS MODIFIED TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEMS DISCUSSED IN PARA 3. CORIA ALSO SAID THAT INTA AND CNIE ARE PREPARED TO FORM A JOINT COMMITTEE TO DRAW UP SPECIFICATIONS FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT AND TO SELECT A PI IF NASA IS AGREEABLE TO THEIR CONDITIONS.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: (1) PLEASE ADVISE THE EMBASSY IF AND TO

WHAT DEGREE DR DOMINGUEZ IS CONNECTED WITH NASA. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT KNOW IF HE IS QUOTE TECHNICALLY INCOMPETENT AND A SCOUNDREL UNQUOTE, AND WE CONSEQUENTLY CANNOT RECOMMEND THAT THE RELATIONSHIP, IF IT EXISTS, BE SEVERED. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, A POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING SITUATION WOULD BE AVOIDED IF NO RELATIONSHIP EXISTS. (2) PLEASE COMMENT ON THE TWO CONTRACTURAL POINTS RAISED BY CORIA. THERE IS AT LEAST A SUPERFICIAL LOGIC TO THE COMPLAINT ABOUT THE RESTRICTION ON RELEASE OR PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, ASSUMING THAT CORIA'S EXPLANATION OF THE RESTRICTION IS NOT TOO DISTORTED. ALSO, PLEASE SPECIFY WHETHER AND TO WHAT DEGREE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS LEVIED ON THE PI MAY BE ALTERED.

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